

Dark Chocolate

Chocolate's Natural Power to Help Your Heart

Despite chocolate's indulgent reputation, scientists believe it may actually do your heart (and your whole cardiovascular system) good.

Good heart health depends on wide open, flexible arteries that are free of blockages and can deliver blood efficiently throughout your body. Studies have shown that consumption of dark chocolate or cocoa may help with all those vital functions.

Natural compounds in cocoa and dark chocolate may aid the cardiovascular system by improving blood flow and reducing blood pressure. Scientists have also discovered that cocoa may help maintain healthy arteries.

Yale University Associate Professor Dr. David Katz recently tested the blood pressure of 45 adults before and after eating dark chocolate. The results were impressive: just two hours after eating dark chocolate the subjects' blood pressure dropped and their blood flow improved. "This clearly suggests that dark chocolate isn't just good; it's good for you," Dr. Katz said of his 2005 study, one of more than the 20 conducted in the past decade on the health value of cocoa and chocolate.

While more research is needed to determine the long-term effects on people with high blood pressure, the research on cocoa and chocolate is accumulating quickly. Recent research shows that dark chocolate and cocoa may:

- Help your arteries relax and widen, lowering blood pressure, promoting good blood flow and reducing the strain on the heart.
- Help prevent the build-up of plaque that can block arteries.
- Have mild anti-blood clotting effects.

